

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony in support of SB 688. As someone who appreciates the outdoors and spent the better part of my childhood traipsing through local streams and forests, and still does as an adult, I am encouraged by the thoughtful and practical approach this bill provides for restoring Maryland's streams and managing its stormwater. Having seen firsthand the outcome of the opposite approach, SB 688 is good news for the tax paying citizens of Maryland.

By focusing on applying the least damaging and most effective tools first, the bill prioritizes capturing stormwater at its source which protects intact forests and floodplains and then can avoid using heavy construction techniques which are so damaging. This bill addresses the importance of "minimizing disturbance to existing streams, floodplains, and forests," prioritizing something that residents, scientists and local leaders have been stressing for many years.

One of the key aspects of this bill that I strongly support is the strengthening of transparency and accountability by requiring alternative analysis, easily understandable community presentations as well as five years of monitoring to ensure projects deliver the ecological benefits that are so important to the state and its citizens, not just modeled numbers. By focusing on measurable functional lift, including improvements to biological conditions, SB 688 helps to ensure that restoration is restorative.

SB 688 makes sure that any intervention is done for the right reasons in the right places which is especially important when public safety and/or infrastructure are at stake. It encourages solutions that protect habitat, reduce erosion and make watersheds more resilient to climate impacts.

A balanced, science-based update to Maryland's restoration framework that protects communities, strengthens environmental outcomes, and ensures public dollars spent appropriately is exactly what is needed. I respectfully and strongly urge a favorable report.